

## Student Spotlight: Gaelle Travels to Peru

One of the goals of The Boston Scholars Program is to help students reach for ambitious goals and achievements that once seemed impossible. For this reason, we feature Gaelle and her travel abroad experience in Peru last summer.

Early on, Gaelle expressed to her strong desire and interest to travel abroad and improve her Spanish. She came to us at Boston Scholars at the end of last school year and asked for help in finding her a program for the summer. BSP found International Doorways and, just days after finishing her sophomore year at Trinity Catholic School, Gaelle found herself packed and headed for Peru. Last minute nerves almost prevented her trip, but her desire to explore another culture won out in the end. Three plane rides later Gaelle arrived, ready for her three week excursion through Peru.

As one of six students from the U.S., Gaelle discovered that her Spanish skills allowed her to help other American students in her group. They all lived with host-families in Cusco, the old Incan capital set in a valley between two mountains, interacting directly and seeing first-hand how a Peruvian family functions. The first half of the trip the group went to a Spanish immersion classes each day to become accustomed to the new language, and did community service work with children at a local school. At the school the group played various sports with the kids, taught them different games, and helped to erect a back wall for the school building. This, Gaelle told us, was the best part of the trip. Working with these kids, who, she says, “always made the best of every situation, never complained, and taught me so much.” The second half of the trip was full of adventures and sightseeing. The group went hiking and camping all over the country; they saw many beautiful sights, including Machu Picchu and the Inca Trail, and got a chance to explore more fully the culture and history of Peru. Below is a photo of Gaelle with some of the students she worked with on her trip.

Gaelle came back from her three weeks trip with an understanding of a different culture, an increased desire to do good and see change in the world, and a greater passion for community service—not to mention a better knowledge of the Spanish language. Gaelle says she’s proud of the fact that, among the many people who say they want to help those in need, she can say she’s actually done it. She feels that community service “has to be something you want to do, not just something you’re made to do...you have to really care.” Gaelle feels that traveling abroad “broadens your horizons...and gives you the chance to participate in a really rare opportunity.” She recommends summer programs like International Doorways, saying, **“you have to take these kinds of opportunities because they are fun and because who knows when the next one will come your way!”** Gaelle’s experiences in Peru have clearly had an impact on her as her heightened self-confidence and sense of self is immediately evident to anyone who talks to her.

**Gaelle Charmant, Boston Scholar ('08)**



**with some of the youth she worked with during her trip to Peru.**

At Trinity Catholic School Gaelle has been mentoring younger students as part of the Big Brothers, Big Sisters Club for the past two years. This school group serves as ambassadors for the school and helps new students adjust to the high school. Gaelle told us she wants to study medicine in college and, since Peru, has decided she wants to become fluent in Spanish. She also plans to study abroad for a semester in a Spanish speaking country during her college years. This summer Gaelle has been accepted into the Boston Area Health Education Center (BAHEC), where she will intern at a different hospital in the Boston area once each week. At Boston Scholars we applaud the courage and leadership Gaelle demonstrated on her trip and at her school; we wanted to share her experience in Peru with the entire Boston Scholar's community because we think she's a great model for what BSP stands for. Congratulations Gaelle on BAHEC this summer and good luck in your senior year at Trinity, finishing this stage of your education and preparing for the next one! We hope her story will inspire other students to make their dreams and goals a reality.